Forest Service

Nez Perce-Clearwater National Forests
Palouse Ranger District

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File Code: 2470; 2430 **Date:** February 4, 2019
Route To:

Subject: Crane Point Project - Request to Exceed 40 Acres

To: Stefani L. Spencer

The following information is provided in support of my request for Regional Forester approval to exceed harvest openings greater than 40 acres in size per FSM 2471.1. This request includes 6 openings, including 13 units, totaling 542 acres associated with the Crane Point project on the Palouse Ranger District.

The Crane Point project was determined to fit under the 2014 amendments of the 2003 Health Forests Restoration Act (HFRA). Section 603 of the 2014 amendments excludes qualifying projects designed to treat insect and disease infestations from documentation in an environmental assessment or environmental impact statement if it meets certain qualifying criteria. Under this categorical exclusion (CE) the Vegetation CE Worksheet and Decision Memo (DM) provide the documentation of record and will be used to cite where analyses have proven the benefits of creating openings larger than 40 acres in this project.

The Crane Point scoping letter was recently released to the public for comment. The 60 day legal notice appeared on August 24, 2018 and included notice of potential harvest unit size exceeding 40 acres. There was limited public comment in response to the scoping letter. The Coeur d'Alene Tribe did make a request for harvest units to be less than 40 acres in size due to concerns over loss of wildlife security habitat. However it was determined that this request of restricting opening size would not accomplish the purpose and need of the project and was not carried through into the final decision.
Following environmental analysis and pending Regional Forester approval, all stands would have a detailed silvicultural prescription reviewed by a certified silviculturist. Silvicultural diagnoses have been completed for all proposed units in this request.

The project proposal for the Crane Point project includes 6 openings greater than 40 acres. According to the National Forest Management Act, all openings created by regeneration type cuts shall be 40 acres or less in size unless they meet certain criteria for exception or approval to exceed this size is granted by the Regional Forester. In accordance with the Region 1 Supplement to Forest Service Manual 2400, on November 22, 2016, the following information is provided in support of this request to exceed the Management Standards and Guidelines for opening sizes in the Regional Guidelines for opening sizes.

The table on the following page is a summary of proposed openings, with their associated units and sizes:

Over 40 Acre Opening Request, Table - *Crane Point*

Opening #	NEPA Unit #	Unit Acres	Stand IDs (FACTS or FSVeg)	Opening Acreage	Harvest Method
1	1	40	25205005	63	Seed Tree Seed Cut (w/ leave trees)
	2	23	25205001		Shelterwood
2	5	61	25205011	137	Seed Tree Seed Cut (w/ leave trees)
			24404031		
	6	76	24404002		Stand Clearcut (w/ leave trees)
			24404004		
			24404029		
3	8	44	24404020	44	Stand Clearcut (w/ leave trees)
4	14	11	25301013	48	Stand Clearcut (w/ leave trees)
	19	23	24404019		
	25	14	24404001		
5	11	50	24404034	94	Two-aged Shelterwood Establishment & Removal Cut (w/ leave trees)
			24404008		
	22	28	24404035		Stand Clearcut (w/ leave trees)
			24404036		
	24	16	24404006		Two-aged Shelterwood Establishment & Removal Cut (w/ leave trees)
6	16	30	24404022	156	Stand Clearcut (w/ leave trees)
			24404016		
			24404023		
			24404027		
	20	126	24404005		

The purposes of the Crane Point Project relevant to this request are:

- Decrease current levels of insect and disease mortality to improve forest health and resiliency (maximizing old growth and large trees to the extent possible) (DM pg. 1)
- Increase the amount of western white pine, western larch, and ponderosa pine and in turn decrease dominance of root-disease intolerant species such as Douglas-fir and grand fir (DM pg. 1)

Approval to exceed the 40 acre opening limitation for these six locations is requested for the following reasons:

1. Exceeding 40 acres better meets the project purpose of creating resilient stand conditions.

   A shift from the dominant Douglas-fir and grand fir cover types to more shade-intolerant early seral species, would contribute to stands that are more resistant and resilient to disturbance (CE worksheet pgs. 2 &14). Regeneration harvests are necessary to create sufficient canopy gaps and openness for planted white pine to outcompete grand fir and other shade tolerants (Jain et al 2004). Regeneration harvests and subsequent reforestation proposed in Crane Point would increase shade-intolerant cover types by about 622 acres (DM p. 5), thereby increasing the landscapes resistance and resilience to the widespread infection level of existing root disease in the project area.

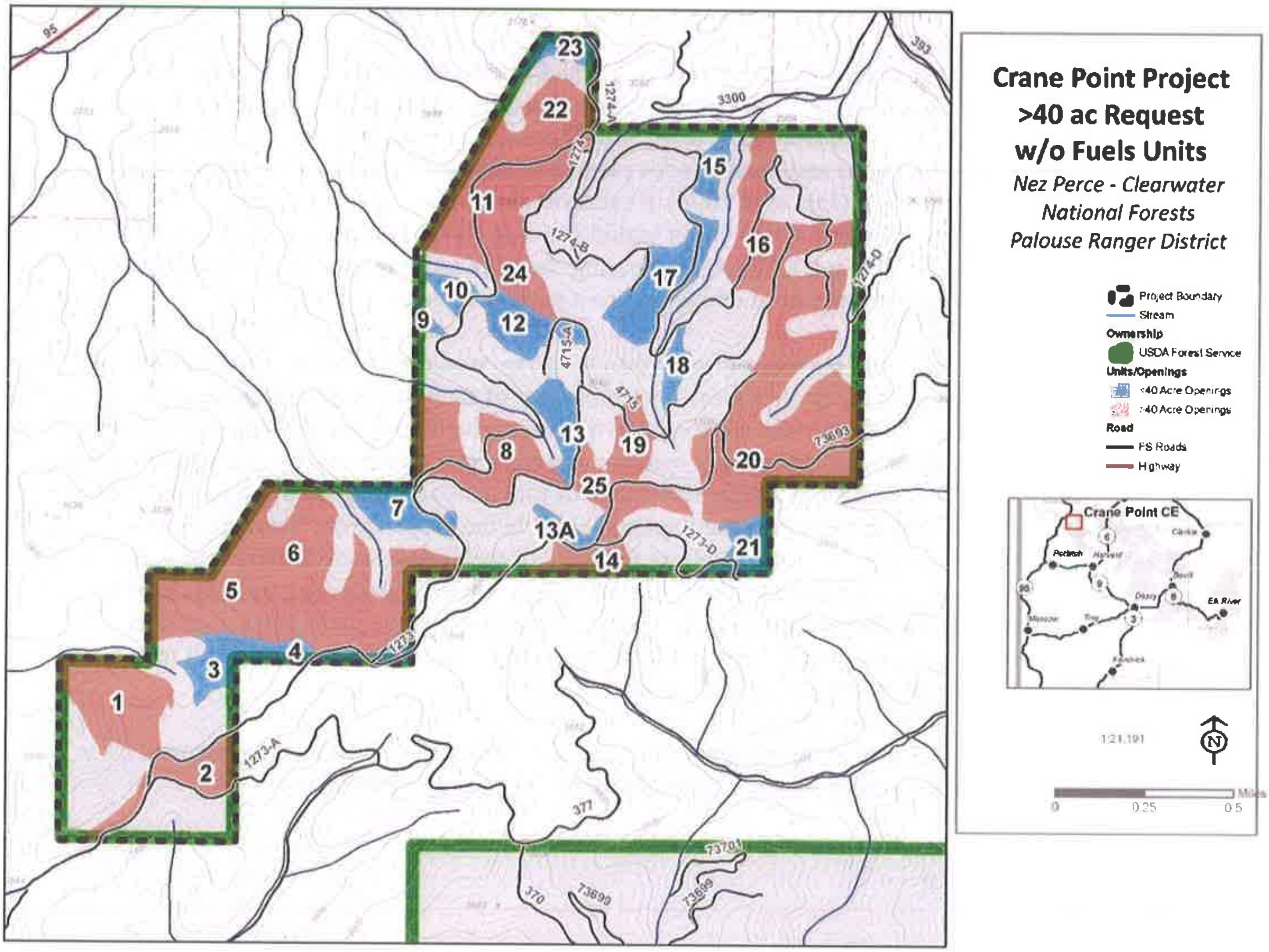
   Treatment areas with openings greater than 40 acres, would incorporate a wide extent of disease problem in the project area. A combination of stand exam data, walkthrough examinations, and field visits were used to diagnose treatment needs for each of the units included in this request. Every unit listed in this request is dominated by shade tolerant tree species. Each unit has a high percentage of root disease susceptible species and root disease is present in these proposed openings and in the project area. Treatments less than 40 acres would do little to address the scale of the disease issue in the project area and these areas can expect continued mortality, volume loss, and a long term cycle of regenerating root disease susceptible species. Treatments using patch sizes of greater than 40 acres or less, would better address the scale of the root disease issue and reduce continued negative impacts of disease infection.

The trailing attachment provides additional information relevant to this request. Attachment #1 is an overview map of the proposed units associated with the Crane Point project.

STEFANI SPENCER
District Ranger

Stefani Spencer

cc: Elizabeth Wood, Scott Godfrey, Jeff Chynoweth, Amanda Villwock, Nicholas Wagner


Crane Point Project
>40 ac Request
w/o Fuels Units
Nez Perce - Clearwater
National Forests
Palouse Ranger District
Project Boundary
Stream
Ownership
USDA Forest Service
Units/Openings
<40 Acre Openings
>40 Acre Openings
Road
FS Roads
Highway
Crane Point CE
Miles
0
0.25
0.5
1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
13A
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21
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23
24
25
1273
1273-A
1273-D
1274
1274-A
1274-B
1274-D
4715
4715-A
73693
73701
73699
3300
377
370
393
95